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818 SW 3rd Avenue, PMB 1237
Portland, OR 97204
USA
e-mail: acraticus@angrynerds.com

# THE NETWORK OF DOMINATION

*Anarchist Analyses of the Institutions, Structures and Systems of Domination and Exploitation to be Debated, Developed and Acted Upon*

by Wolfi Landstreicher

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# INTRODUCTION

The following essays examine several of the various institutions, structures, systems and relationships of domination and exploitation which define our current existence. These essays are not intended to be comprehensive nor to be final answers, but rather to be part of a discussion that I hope will go on in anarchist circles aimed at developing a specifically anarchist theoretical exploration of the reality we are facing. A great deal of the analysis that currently goes on in anarchist circles is dependent on marxist or postmodernist categories and concepts. These may indeed be useful, but to simply accept them *a priori*, without examining social reality in terms of our own specifically anarchist revolutionary project indicates an intellectual laziness. So I hope we can begin to discuss and examine the world in terms of our own projects, dreams and desires, certainly grasping all analyses that we find useful, but in order to create our own theoretical and practical revolutionary project.



removed) provides a useful tool for understanding this. What is domestication, if not the expropriation of the life of a being by another who then exploits that life for her or his own purposes? Civilization is thus the systematic and institutionalized domestication of the vast majority of people in a society by the few who are served by the network of domination.

Thus the revolutionary process of reappropriating our lives is a process of decivilizing ourselves, of throwing off our domestication. This does not mean becoming passive slaves to our instincts (if such even exist) or dissolving ourselves in the alleged oneness of Nature. It means becoming uncontrollable individuals capable of making and carrying out the decisions that affect our lives in free association with others.

It should be obvious from this that I reject any models for an ideal world (and distrust any vision that is too perfect – I suspect that there, the individual has disappeared). Since the essence of a revolutionary struggle fitting with anarchist ideals is the reappropriation of life by individuals who have been exploited, dispossessed and dominated, it would be in the process of this struggle that people would decide how they want to create their lives, what in this world they feel they can appropriate to increase their freedom, open possibilities and add to their enjoyment, and what would only be a burden stealing from the joy of life and undermining possibilities for expanding freedom. I don't see how such a process could possibly create any single, universal social model. Rather, innumerable experiments varying drastically from place to place and changing over time would reflect the singular needs, desires, dreams and aspirations of each and every individual.

So, indeed, let's destroy civilization, this network of domination, but not in the name of any model, of an ascetic morality of sacrifice or of a mystical disintegration into a supposedly unalienated oneness with Nature, but rather because the reappropriation of our lives, the collective re-creation of ourselves as uncontrollable and unique individuals is the destruction of civilization – of this ten thousand year old network of domination that has spread itself over the globe – and the initiation of a marvelous and frightening journey into the unknown that is freedom.

# AFTERWORD:
## *Destroy Civilization?*

I assume that all anarchists would agree that we want to put an end to every institution, structure and system of domination and exploitation. The rejection of these things is, after all, the basic meaning of anarchism. Most would also agree that among these institutions, structures and systems are the state, private property, religion, law, the patriarchal family, class rule…

In recent years, some anarchists have begun to talk in what appears to be broader terms of the need to destroy civilization. This has, of course, led to a reaction in defense of civilization. Unfortunately, this debate has been mainly acrimonious, consisting of name-calling, mutual misrepresentation and territorial disputes over the ownership of the label "anarchist", rather than real argumentation. One of the problems (though probably not the most significant one) behind this incapacity to really debate the question is that very few individual on either side of it have tried to explain precisely what they mean by "civilization". Instead, it remains a nebulous term that represents all that is bad for one side and all that is good for the other.

In order to develop a more precise definition of civilization, it is worthwhile to examine when and where civilization is said to have arisen and what differences actually exist between societies currently defined as civilized and those not considered. Such an examination shows that the existence of animal husbandry, agriculture, a sedentary way of life, a refinement of arts, crafts and techniques or even the simply forms of metal smelting are not enough to define a society as civilized (though they do comprise the necessary material basis for the rise of civilization). Rather what arose about ten thousand years ago in the "cradle of civilization" and what is shared by all civilized societies but lacking in all those that are defined as "uncivilized" is a network of institutions, structures and systems that impose social relationships of dominations and exploitation. In other words, a civilized society is one comprised of the state, property, religion (or in modern societies, ideology), law, the patriarchal family, commodity exchange, class rule – everything we, as anarchists, oppose.

To put it another way, what all civilized societies have in common is the systematic expropriation of the lives of those who live within them. The critique of domestication (with any moral underpinnings



# THE POWER OF THE STATE

It is not uncommon today, even in anarchist circles, to hear the state described as a mere servant of the multinationals, the IMF, the World Bank and other international economic institutions. According to this perspective, the state is not so much the holder and arbiter of power as merely a coordinator of the institutions of social control through which corporate economic rulers maintain their power. From this it is possible to draw conclusions that are quite detrimental to the development of an anarchist revolutionary project. If the state is merely a political structure for maintaining stability that is currently in the service of the great economic powers rather than a power in its own right with its own interests maintaining itself through domination and repression, then it could be reformed democratically made into an institutional opposition to the power of the multinationals. It would simply be a matter of "the People" becoming a counter-power and taking control of the state. Such an idea seems to lie behind the absurd notion of certain contemporary anti-capitalists that we should support the interests of nation-states against the international economic institutions. A clearer understanding of the state is necessary to counteract this trend.

The state could not exist if our capacity to determine the conditions of our own existence as individuals in free association with each other had not been taken from us. This dispossession is the fundamental *social* alienation which provides the basis for all domination and exploitation. This alienation can rightly be traced to the rise of property (I say property as such and not just *private* property, because from very early on a great deal of property was *institutional*—owned by the state). Property can be defined as the exclusive claim by certain individuals and institutions over tools, spaces and materials necessary for existence, making them inaccessible to others. This claim is enforced through explicit or implicit violence. No longer free to grasp whatever is necessary for creating their lives, the dispossessed are forced to conform to conditions determined by the self-proclaimed owners of property in order to maintain their existence, which thus becomes an existence in servitude. The state is the institutionalization of this process which transforms the alienation of the capacity of individuals to determine the conditions of their own existence into the accumulation of power into the hands of a few.

It is futile and unnecessary to try to determine whether the accumulation of power or the accumulation of wealth had priority when property and the state first arose. Certainly now they are thoroughly integrated. It does seem likely that the state was the first *institution* to accumulate property in order to create a surplus under its control, a surplus that gave it real power over the social conditions under which its subjects had to exist. This surplus allowed it to develop the various institutions through which it enforced its power: military institutions, religious/ideological institutions, bureaucratic institutions, police institutions and so on. Thus, the state, from its origins, can be thought of as a capitalist in its own right, with its own specific economic interests that serve precisely to maintain its power over the conditions of social existence.

Like any capitalist, the state provides a specific service at a price. Or more accurately, the state provides two integrally related services: protection of property and social peace. It offers protection to private property through a system of laws that define and limit it and through the force of arms by which these laws are enforced. In fact, private property can only be said to truly exist when the institutions of the state are there to protect it from those who would simply take what they want—without this institutional protection, there is merely the conflict of individual interests. This is why Stirner described private property as a form of social or state property to be held in contempt by unique ones. The state also provides protection for the "commons" from external raiders and from that which the state determines to be abuse by its subjects through law and armed force. As the sole protector of all property within its borders—a role maintained by the state's monopoly on violence—it establishes concrete control over all this property (relative, of course, to its real capacity for exercising that control). Thus the cost of this protection consists not only of taxes and various forms of compulsory service, but also of conformity to roles necessary to the social apparatus that maintains the state and acceptance of, at best, a relationship of vassalage to the state, which may claim any property or enclose any common space "in the common interest" at any time. The existence of property requires the state for protection and the existence of the state maintains property, but always ultimately as *state* property regardless of how "private" it supposedly is.

The implied violence of law and the explicit violence of the military and the police through which the state protects property are the same means by which it maintains social peace. The violence by



been dispossessed of their own lives – everyone becomes equal, because *everyone* becomes nothing. This is true even of those with property and power, because their status in society is not based one who they are, but on *what they have*. The property and the power (which always resides in a *role* and not in an individual) are all that have worth in this society. Equality before the law serves the rulers, precisely because its aim is to preserve the order in which they rule. Equality before the law disguises social inequality precisely behind that which maintains it.

But, of course, law does not maintain the social order *as words*. The word of the law would be meaningless without physical force behind it. And that physical force exists in the systems of enforcement and punishment: the police, judicial and prison systems. Equality before the law is, in fact, a very thin veneer for hiding the inequality of access to the conditions of existence, the means for creating our lives on our terms. Reality breaks through this veneer constantly, and its control can only be maintained by force and through fear.

From the perspective of the rulers of this world, we are, indeed, all criminals (at least potentially), all monsters threatening their tranquil sleep, because we are all potentially capable of seeing through the veil of the law and choosing to ignore it and take back the moments of our lives whenever we can on our own terms. Thus, law, itself, (and the social order of property and power which require it) makes us equal precisely by criminalizing us. It is, therefore, the logical outcome of law and the social order that produces it that imprisonment and policing would become universal, hand in hand with the development of the global supermarket.

In this light, it should be clear that there is no use in making laws more just. There is no use in seeking to monitor the police. There is no use in trying to reform this system, because every reform will inevitably play back into the system, increasing the number of laws, increasing the level of monitoring and policing, making the world even more like a prison. There is only one way to respond to this situation, if we would have our lives as our own. To attack this society in order to destroy it.

of programs that encourage snitching – a factor that is also reminiscent of prisons where the authorities seek out and reward snitches. Of course other prisoners have a rather different attitude toward these scum.

But all of this is purely descriptive, a picture of the social prison that is being built around us. A real understanding of this situation that we can use to fight against this process requires a deeper analysis. In fact, prison and policing rest on the idea that there are crimes, and this idea rests on the law. Law is portrayed as an objective reality by which the actions of the citizens of a state can be judged. Law, in fact, creates a kind of equality. Anatole France expressed this ironically by pointing out that before the law, beggars and kings alike were forbidden from stealing bread and sleeping under bridges. From this, it is clear that before the law we all become equal, simply because we all become *ciphers*, non-entities without individual feelings, relationships, desires and needs.

The objective of law is to regulate society. The necessity for the regulation of a society implies that it is not meeting the needs or fulfilling the desires of everyone within it. It rather exists as an imposition on a greater part of those who make it up. Of course, such a situation could only come to exist where *inequality* of the most significant kind exists – the inequality of access to the means for creating one's life on one's own terms. For those with the upper hand, this state of social inequality has the dual name of property and power. For those on the bottom, its name is poverty and subjection. Law is the lie that transforms this inequality into an equality that serves the masters of society.

In a situation in which everyone had full and equal access to all that they need to fulfill themselves and create their lives on their own terms, a wealth of individual differences would flourish. A vast array of dreams and desires would express themselves creating an apparently infinite spectrum of passions, loves and hatreds, conflicts and affinities. This equality in which neither property nor power would exist would thus express the frightening and beautiful non-hierarchical inequality of individuality.

Contrarily, where the inequality of access to the means for creating one's life exists – i.e., where the vast majority of people have

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dividual, with the right technology they can discover someone's general vicinity. This helped cops make an arrest in St. Louis last November.



which people are dispossessed of their capacity to create life on their own terms is nothing less than *social war* which manifests daily in the usually gradual (but sometimes as quick as a police bullet) slaughter of those who are exploited, excluded and marginalized by the social order. When people under attack begin to recognize their enemy, they frequently act to counter-attack. The state's task of maintaining *social peace* is thus an act of *social war* on the part of the rulers against the ruled—the suppression and prevention of any such counter-attack. The violence of those who rule against those they rule is inherent in social peace. But a social peace based solely on brute force is always precarious. It is necessary for the state to implant the idea in people's heads that they have a stake in the continued existence of the state and of the social order it maintains. This may take place as in ancient Egypt where religious propaganda maintaining the divinity of the Pharaoh justified the extortion by which he took possession of all the surplus grain making the populace absolutely dependent on his good will in times of famine. Or it may take the form of institutions for democratic participation which create a more subtle form of blackmail in which we are obliged to participate if we want to complain, but in which we are equally obliged to accept "the will of the people" if we do participate. But, behind these forms of blackmail, whether subtle or blatant, the arms, the prisons, the soldiers and the cops are always there, and this is the essence of the state and of social peace. The rest is just veneer.

Though the state can be looked upon as capitalist (in the sense that it accumulated power by accumulating surplus wealth in a dialectic process), capitalism as we know it with its "private" economic institutions is a relatively recent development traceable to the beginning of the modern era. This development has certainly produced significant changes in the dynamics of power since a significant portion of the ruling class are now not *directly* part of the state apparatus except as citizens, like all those they exploit. But these changes do not mean that the state has been subjugated to the various global economic institutions or that it has become peripheral to the functioning of power.

If the state is itself a capitalist, with its own economic interests to pursue and maintain, then the reason that it works to maintain capitalism is not that it has been subordinated to other capitalist institutions, but because in order to maintain its power it must maintain its economic strength as a capitalist among capitalists. Specific weaker

states end up being subjugated to global economic interests for the same reason that smaller firms are, because they do not have the strength to maintain their own interests. The great states play at least as significant a role in determining global economic policies as the great corporations. It is, in fact, the arms of the state that will enforce these policies.

The power of the state resides in its legal and institutional monopoly on violence. This gives the state a very concrete material power upon which the global economic institutions are dependent. Institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF do not only include delegates from all the major state powers in all decision-making processes; they also depend upon the military force of the most powerful states to impose their policies, the threat of physical violence that must always stand behind economic extortion if it is to function. With the real power of violence in their hands, the great states are hardly going to function as mere servants to the global economic institutions. Rather in proper capitalist form, their relationship is one of mutual extortion accepted for the benefit of the entire ruling class.

In addition to its monopoly on violence, the state also controls many of the networks and institutions necessary to commerce and production. Highway systems, railway systems, ports, airports, satellite and fiber optic systems necessary to communications and information networks are generally state-run and always subject to state control. Scientific and technological research necessary to new developments in production is largely dependent on the facilities of state-run universities and the military.

Thus corporate power depends upon state power to maintain itself. It is not a matter of the subjugation of one sort of power to another, but the development of an integral system of power that manifests itself as the two-headed hydra of capital and the state, a system that functions as a whole to maintain domination and exploitation, the conditions imposed by the ruling class for the maintenance of our existence. Within this context, institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank are best understood as means by which the various state and corporate powers coordinate their activities in order to maintain unity of domination over the exploited classes in the midst of the competition of economic and political interests. Thus the state does not serve these institutions, but rather these institutions serve the interests of the most powerful states and capitalists.



# WHY DO WE ALL LIVE IN PRISON?

## *Prison, Law and Social Control*

There is a place in this society where one is perpetually under surveillance, where every movement is monitored and controlled, where everyone is under suspicion except the police and their bosses, where all are assumed to be criminals. I am speaking, of course, of prison…

But at an ever-quickening pace, this description is coming to fit more and more public spaces. Shopping malls and the business districts of major cities are under video surveillance. Armed guards patrol schools, libraries, hospitals and museums. One is subject to search at airports and bus stations. Police helicopters fly over cities and even *forests* in search of crime. The methodology of imprisonment, which is one with the methodology of the police, is gradually being imposed over the entire social landscape.

This process is being imposed through fear, and the authorities justify it to us in terms of our need for protection – from criminals, from terrorists, from drugs and violence. But who are these criminals and terrorists, who are these monsters that threaten us every moment of our fear-filled lives? A moment's careful consideration is enough to answer this question. In the eyes of the rulers of this world, *we* are the criminals and terrorists, *we* are the monsters – at least potentially. After all, *we* are the ones they are policing and monitoring. *We* are the ones who are watched on the video-cameras and searched at the bus stations. One can only wonder if it is the fact that this is so *glaringly* obvious that makes people blind to it.

The rule of fear is such that the social order even solicits our aid in our own policing. Parents register their toddlers' fingerprints with police agencies connected with the FBI. A Florida-based company called Applied Digital Solutions (ADS) has created the "Veri-Chip" (aka the "Digital Angel") that can hold personal, medical and other information and is intended to be implanted under the skin. Their idea is to promote its voluntary use by people, of course, *for their own protection*. It may soon be connected to the network of the Global Positioning System (GPS) Satellite so that anyone with the implant could be monitored constantly.* In addition there are dozens

* There is a technology device currently in widespread use that can also help police in tracking someone down. I am speaking of the cellular phone. Although it apparently cannot lead the police directly to on in-

played by the commodity – there is no real basis left for family cohesion. Thus, we see the current horror of the breakdown of the family without its destruction. And few people are able to conceive of a full life involving intimacy and love without it.

If we are to truly take back our lives in their totality, if we are to truly liberate our desires from the chains of fear and of the commodity, we must strive to understand all that has chained as, and we must take action to attack and destroy it all. Thus, in attacking the institutions that enslave us, we cannot forget to attack that most intimate source of our slavery, the family.



It is, thus, not possible for those of us who seek the destruction of the social order to play the nation-state against the capitalists and gain anything by it. Their greatest interest is the same, to maintain the current order of things. For our part it is necessary to attack the state and capitalism with all of our might, recognizing them as the two-headed hydra of domination and exploitation that we must destroy if we are ever to take back our capacity to create the conditions of our existence.

# THE COST OF SURVIVAL

Everything has a price, the measurement of its value as a quantity determined in terms of a general equivalent. Nothing has value *in itself*. All value is determined in relationship to the market—and this includes the value of our lives, of our selves. Our lives have been divided into units of measured time that we are compelled to sell in order to buy back our survival in the form of bits of the stolen lives of others that production has transformed into commodities for sale. This is economic reality.

This horrendous alienation has its basis in the intertwining of three of the most fundamental institutions of this society: property, commodity exchange and work. The integral relationship between these three creates the system through which the ruling class extracts the wealth that is necessary for maintaining their power. I am speaking here of the economy.

The social order of domination and exploitation has its origins in a fundamental social alienation, the origins of which are a matter for intriguing speculation, but the nature of which is quite clear. The vast multitudes of people have been robbed of their capacity to determine the conditions of their own existence, to create the lives and relationships they desire, so that the few at the top can accumulate power and wealth and turn the totality of social existence to their own benefit. In order for this to occur, people have to be robbed of the means by which they were able to fulfill their needs and their desires, their dreams and aspirations. This could only occur with the enclosing of certain areas and the hoarding of certain things so that they are no longer accessible to everyone. But such enclosures and hoards would be meaningless unless some one had the means to prevent them from being raided—a force to keep others from taking what they want without asking permission. Thus with such accumulation it becomes necessary to create an apparatus to protect it. Once established this system leaves the majority in a position of dependence on the few who have carried out this appropriation of wealth and power. To access any of the accumulated wealth the multitudes are forced to exchange a major portion of the goods they produce. Thus, part of the activity they originally carried out for themselves must now be carried out for their rulers, simply in order to guaran-



sires, children quickly learn to expect lack and to kiss ass in the hope of gaining a little of what they want. Thus, the economic ideology of work and commodity consumption is engrained into us by the relationships forced upon us in childhood. When we reach adolescence and our sexual urges become more focused, the lack we have been taught to expect causes us to be easily led into economized conceptions of love and sex. When we get into a relationship, we will tend to see it as one of ownership, often reinforced with some symbolic token. Those who don't economize their sexual urges adequately are stigmatized, particularly if they are girls. We cling to relationships with a desperation that reflects the very real scarcity of love and pleasure in this world. And those who have been taught so well that they are incapable of truly realizing their own desires finally accept that if they cannot own, or even truly *recognize*, their own desires, at least they can define the limits of another's desires, who in turn defines the limits of theirs. It is safe. It is secure. And it is miserable. It is *the couple*, the precursor of the family.

The desperate fear of the scarcity of love, thus, reproduces the conditions that maintain this scarcity. The attempt to explore and experiment with ways of loving that escape the institutionalization of love and desire in the couple, in the family, in marriage perpetually runs up against economized love. This should come as no surprise since certainly this is the appropriate form for love to take in a society dominated by the economy.

Yet the economic usefulness of the family also exposes its poverty. In pre-industrial societies (and to some extent in industrial societies previous to the rise of consumerism), the economic reality of the family resided largely in the usefulness of each family member in carrying out essential tasks for the survival of the family. Thus, the unity of the family served a purpose relating to basic needs and tended to be extended beyond the nuclear family unit. But in the West, with the rise of consumerism after World War II, the economic role of the family changed. Its purpose was now to reproduce consumers representing various target markets. Thus, the family became the factory for producing housewives, teenagers, school kids, all beings whose capacities to realize their desire has been destroyed so that it can be channeled into commodity consumption. The family remains necessary as the means for reproducing these roles within individual human beings, but since the family itself is no longer the defining limit of impoverished desire – that role now

lives – like the manager at the workplace, who is the daily face of the boss, while the owner remains mostly invisible.

So the real social purpose of the family is the reproduction of human beings. This does not merely mean giving birth to children, but also transforming this human raw material into a being useful to society – a loyal subject, a good citizen, an industrious worker, an avid consumer. So from the moment of birth, it is necessary that mother and father begin to train the child. It is on this level that we can understand the immediate exclamation: "It's a boy!" "It's a girl!" Gender is the one social role that can be assessed from biology at birth, and so it is the first to be imposed through a variety of symbols – colors of nursery walls and blankets, clothing styles, toys offered for play, the kinds of games encouraged, and so on.

But this happens in conjunction with an emphasis on childishness as well. Rather than encouraging independence, self-reliance and the capacity to make their own decisions and act on them, children are encouraged to act naïve, inept, lacking the capacity to reason and act sensibly. This is all considered "cute" and "cuteness" is supposed to be the primary trait of children. Although most children, in fact, use "cuteness" quite cleverly as a way to get around the demands of adults, the social reinforcement of this trait, nonetheless, supports and extends helplessness and dependence long enough for social conditioning to take hold, for servility to become a habit. At this point, "cuteness" begins to be discouraged and mocked as childishness.

Since the normal relationship between a parent and their child is one of *ownership* and thus of domination and submission on the most intimate level, the wiles through which children survive this end up becoming the habitual methods they use to interact with the world, a network of defense mechanisms that Wilhelm Reich has referred to as character armoring. This may, indeed, be the most horrifying aspect of the family – it's conditioning *and our attempts to defend ourselves against it* can scar us for life.

In fact, the fears, phobias and defenses instilled in us by the authority of the family tend to enforce the reproduction of the family structure. The ways in which parents reinforce and extend the incapacity of children guarantee that their desires remain beyond their own reach and under the parents' – that is, authority's – control. This is true even of parents who "spoil" their children, since such spoiling generally takes the form of channeling the child's desires toward commodity consumption. Unable to realize their own de-



tee their survival. As the power of the few increases, they come to control more and more of the resources and the products of labor until finally the activity of the exploited is nothing but labor to create commodities in exchange for a wage which they then spend to buy back that commodity. Of course, the full development of this process is slow in part because it is met with resistance at every turn. There are still parts of the earth and parts of life that have not been enclosed by the state and the economy, but most of our existence has been stamped with a price tag, and its cost has been increasing geometrically for ten thousand years.

So the state and the economy arose together as aspects of the alienation described above. They constitute a two-headed monster imposing an impoverished existence upon us, in which our lives are transformed into a struggle for survival. This is as true in the affluent countries as in those which have been impoverished by capitalist expropriation. What defines life as mere survival is neither the dearth of goods available at a price nor the lack of the means to buy those goods. Rather when one is forced to sell ones life away, to give one's energy to a project that is not of one's choosing, but that serves to benefit another who tells one what to do, for a meager compensation that allows one to buy a few necessities and pleasures—this is merely surviving, no matter how many *things* one may be able to buy. Life is not an accumulation of things, it is a qualitative relationship to the world.

This coerced selling of one's life, this wage-*slavery*, reduces life to a commodity, an existence divided into measured pieces which are sold for so much a piece. Of course to the worker, who has been blackmailed into selling her life in this way the wage will never seem to be enough. How could it be when what has really been lost is not so much the allotted units of time as the quality of life itself? In a world where lives are bought and sold in exchange for survival, where the beings and things that make up the natural world are simply goods for sale to be exploited in the production of other goods for sale, the value of things and the value of life becomes a number, a measurement, and that measurement is always in dollars or pesos or euros or yen—that is to say in money. But no amount of money and no amount of the goods money buys can compensate for the emptiness of such an existence for the fact that this sort of valuation can only exist by draining the quality, the energy, the wonder from life.

The struggle against the rule of the economy—which must go hand in hand with the struggle against the state—must begin with a refusal of this quantification of existence that can only occur when are lives are stolen away from us. It is the struggle to destroy the institutions of property, commodity exchange and work—not in order to make people dependent on new institutions in which the rule of survival takes a more charitable face, but so that we may all reappropriate our lives as our own and pursue our needs, desires, dreams and aspirations in all their immeasurable singularity.



# A FAMILY AFFAIR

In the struggle to take back our lives, it is necessary to call every institution into question, even those that reach into the most intimate aspects of our lives. In fact, it is particularly important to challenge these institutions, because their closeness to us, their intimacy, can make them appear not to be institutions at all, but rather the most natural of relationships. And then they can work their insidious ploys and make domination itself appear natural.

Family relationships are taken for granted, even by most anarchists. It is precisely the intimacy of these relationships that makes them appear so natural. And yet the family as we know it – the nuclear family, that ideal unit for commodity consumption – is just a little more than a half a century old, and is already in a state of disintegration. And earlier forms of family relationships seem to reflect the requirements of economic necessity or social cohesion rather than any natural inclination.

The institution of the family goes hand in hand with the institution of marriage. If in non-state societies marriage has tended to be a very loose bond which was aimed primarily at maintaining certain sorts of kinship relationships, with the rise of the state and of property, it became a much tighter relationship, in fact a relationship of ownership. More specifically, marriage became that institution in which the father, recognized as the owner of his family, gave his daughter to another man who then, as her husband, became her new owner. Thus, the family is the seat of the domination of women that spreads from there to all of society.

Within the family, though, there is a further hierarchy. The central purpose of the family is the reproduction of society, and this requires the reproduction of human beings. Thus, the wife is expected to bear children, and the children, though still ultimately owned by the man, are under the direct authority of their mother. This is why many of us who grow up in families in which the so-called "traditional" gender roles were accepted, in fact, experienced our *mothers* as the first authority to dominate us. Dad was a distant figure, working his 60 to 70 hours a week (despite the supposed labor victory of the 40-hour work week) to provide his family with all the things that this society claims are necessary for the good life. Mom scolded us, spanked us, set our limits, strove to define our

another, one morality against another, thus leaving in place social alienation. This is what made it possible to recuperate this revolt for democracy and humanitarian capitalism or socialism, in which "the people", "society" or "the human race" play the role of god.

Religion, property, the state and all the other institutions of dominations are based on the fundamental separations that cause social alienation. As such, they constitute the sacred. If we are to again be able to grasp the marvelous as our own, to experience wonder and joy directly on our own terms, to make love with oceans or dance with stars with no gods or priests intervening to tell us what it must mean, or, to put it more simply, if we are to grasp our lives as our own, creating them as we will, then we must attack the sacred in all its forms. We must desecrate the sacredness of property and authority, of ideologies and institutions, of all the gods, temples and fetishes whatever their basis. Only in this way can we experience all of the inner and outer worlds as our own, on the basis of the only equality that can interest us, the equal recognition of what is wonderful in the singularity of each one of us. Only in this way can we experience and create the marvelous in all of its beauty and wonder.



# FROM PROLETARIAN TO INDIVIDUAL:
## Toward an Anarchist Understanding of Class

The social relationships of class and exploitation are not simple. Workerist conceptions, which are based on the idea of an objectively revolutionary class that is defined in terms of its relationship to the means of production, ignore the mass of those world-wide whose lives are stolen from them by the current social order but who can find no place within its productive apparatus. Thus these conceptions end up presenting a narrow and simplistic understanding of exploitation and revolutionary transformation. In order to carry out a revolutionary struggle against exploitation, we need to develop an understanding of class as it actually exists in the world without seeking any guarantees.

At its most basic, class society is one in which there are those who rule and those who are ruled, those who exploit and those who are exploited. Such a social order can only arise when people lose their capacity to determine the conditions of their own existence. Thus, the essential quality shared by the exploited is their dispossession, their loss of the capacity to make and carry out the basic decisions about how they live.

The ruling class is defined in terms of its own project of accumulating power and wealth. While there are certainly significant conflicts within the ruling class in terms of specific interests and real competition for control of resources and territory, this overarching project aimed at the control of social wealth and power, and thus of the lives and relationships of every living being, provides this class with a unified positive project.

The exploited class has no such positive project to define it. Rather it is defined in terms of what is done to it, what is taken away from it. Being uprooted from the ways of life that they had known and created with their peers, the only community that is left to the people who make up this heterogeneous class is that provided by capital and the state—the community of work and commodity exchange decorated with whatever nationalist, religious, ethnic, ra-

cial or subcultural ideological constructions through which the ruling order creates identities into which to channel individuality and revolt. The concept of a positive proletarian identity, of a single, unified, positive proletarian project, has no basis in reality since what defines one as proletarian is precisely that her life has been stolen from her, that he has been transformed into a pawn in the projects of the rulers.

The workerist conception of the proletarian project has its origins in the revolutionary theories of Europe and the United States (particularly certain marxist and syndicalist theories). By the late 19th century, both western Europe and the eastern United States were well on their way to being thoroughly industrialized, and the dominant ideology of progress equated technological development with social liberation. This ideology manifested in revolutionary theory as the idea that the industrial working class was objectively revolutionary because it was in the position to take over the means of production developed under capitalism (which, as products of progress, were assumed to be inherently liberating) and turn them to the service of the human community. By ignoring most of the world (along with a significant portion of the exploited in the industrialized areas), revolutionary theorists were thus able to invent a positive project for the proletariat, an objective historical mission. That it was founded on the bourgeois ideology of progress was ignored. In my opinion, the luddites had a much clearer perspective, recognizing that industrialism was another one of the masters' tools for dispossessing them. With good reason, they attacked the machines of mass production.

The process of dispossession has long since been accomplished in the West (though of course it is a process that is going on at all times even here), but in much of the South of the world it is still in its early stages. Since the process started in the West though, there have been some significant changes in the functioning of the productive apparatus. Skilled factory positions have largely disappeared, and what is needed in a worker is flexibility, the capacity to adapt—in other words, the capacity to be an interchangeable cog in the machine of capital. In addition, factories tend to require far fewer workers to carry on the productive process, both because of developments in technology and management techniques that have allowed a more decentralized productive process and because increasingly the type of work necessary in factories is largely just monitoring and maintaining machines.



maintain the separation. So there it is completely accurate in the literal sense to speak of property as sacred and of commodities as fetishes. Capitalism is profoundly religious.

The history of Western religion has not been one of simple acceptance of the sacred and of god (I don't have enough knowledge to speak of non-Western religions in this regard). Through out the Middle Ages and beyond there were heretical movements that went so far as to question the very existence of god and of the sacred. Expressed in the language of their time, these movements – the Free Spirits, the Adamites, the Ranters and many others – denied the separation that defined sacredness, claimed divinity as their own and thus reappropriated their will and capacity to act on their own terms, to create their own lives. This, of course placed them at odds with the society around them, the society of the state, economy and religion.

As capitalism began to arise in the Western world and to spread itself through colonial imperialism, a movement of revolt against this process also arose. Far from being a movement for a return to an imagined idyllic past, it carried within itself the seeds of anarchy and true communism. This revolutionary seed was most likely sparked by the interactions of people from several different cultural backgrounds who were being dispossessed in different ways – the poor of Europe whose lands were "enclosed" (shall we say consecrated, which seems strangely synonymous with stolen?), forcing them onto the roads and the seas, African stolen from their homelands, separated from their families and cultures and forced into slavery and indigenous people already in the lands being colonized, finding themselves dispossessed and often slaughtered. Uprisings along the Atlantic seaboard (in Europe, Africa and America) were not infrequent in the 1600's and early 1700's, and usually involved egalitarian cooperation between the all of these groups of the dispossessed and exploited.

But to my mind, one of the main weaknesses of this movement of revolt is that it never seemed to completely free itself from the religious perception of the world. While the capitalist class expropriated more and more aspects of the world and of life from the hands of individuals, setting them aside for its in uses and making them accessible only through the appropriate mediation of the rituals of wage labor and commodity exchange, the rebels, for the most part, could not make the final step of rebelling absolutely against the sacred. So they merely opposed one conception of the sacred against

reality. These specialists are themselves consecrated, separated from the tasks of normal life and fed by the sacrifices and offerings of those for whom they interpret reality. Of course, the concept that there can be those with a special connection to the meaning of reality implies that there is only one meaning that is universal and that thus requires special attention and capacities to be understood. So, first as shamans and later as priests, these sacred persons expropriate the individual's capacity to create their own meaning. One's poetic encounters with the world become insignificant, and the places, things and beings that are special to an individual are reduced to mere whims with no social significance. They are replaced by the sacred places, things and institutions determined by the priest, which are then kept away from profane laymen and women, presented only through the proper mediation of ritual to guarantee that the minds of the flock remain clouded so that don't see the actual banality of the sacred.

It is precisely the nature of the sacred as *separation* that gives birth to the gods. On close examination, what is a god if not the symbol of the misplaced human capacity to will, to act for oneself, to create life and meaning on one's own terms? And religion, in creating gods, in fact serves the ruling class in a most essential way. It blinds the exploited to the real reason why they are separated from their capacity to determine their own existence. It is not a question of expropriation and social alienation, but of a separation that is inherent in the nature of things. All power resides in the gods, and we can only accept their will, striving to please them as best we can. Anything else is hubris. Thus, the actual expropriation of people's capacities to create their own lives disappears behind a divinely determined fate that cannot be fought. And since the state represents the will of god on earth, it too cannot be fought, but must merely be endured. The only link that can be made with this sacred power is that offered by the mediation of religious ritual, a "link" that, in fact, guarantees the continuation of the separation on any practical level. The end of this separation would be the end of the sacred and of religion.

Once we recognize that it is consecration – that is to say, separation – that defines the sacred, it becomes clear why authority, property and all of the institutions of domination are *sacred*. They are all the social form of separation, the consecration of capacities and wealth that were once accessible to all of us to a specialized use so that now we cannot access except through the proper rituals which



On a practical level this means that we are all, as individuals, expendable to the production process, because we are all replaceable—that lovely capitalist egalitarianism in which we are all equal to zero. In the first world, this has had the effect of pushing increasing numbers of the exploited into increasingly precarious positions: day labor, temporary work, service sector jobs, chronic unemployment, the black market and other forms of illegality, homelessness and prison. The steady job with its guarantee of a somewhat stable life—even if one's life is not one's own—is giving way to a lack of guarantees where the illusions provided by a moderately comfortable consumerism can no longer hide that life under capitalism is always lived on the edge of catastrophe.

In the third world, people who have been able to create their own existence, if sometimes a difficult one, are finding their land and their other means for doing so being pulled out from under them as the machines of capital quite literal invade their homes and eat away any possibility to continue living directly off their own activity. Torn from their lives and lands, they are forced to move to the cities where there is little employment for them. Shantytowns develop around the cities, often with populations higher than the city proper. Without any possibility of steady employment, the inhabitants of these shantytowns are compelled to form a black market economy to survive, but this also still serves the interests of capital. Others, in desperation, choose immigration, risking imprisonment in refugee camps and centers for undocumented foreigners in the hope of improving their condition.

So, along with dispossession, precariousness and expendability are increasingly the shared traits of those who make up the exploited class worldwide. If, on the one hand, this means that this commodity civilization is creating in its midst a class of barbarians who truly have nothing to lose in bringing it down (and not in the ways imagined by the old workerist ideologues), on the other hand, these traits do not in themselves provide any basis for a positive project of the transformation of life. The rage provoked by the miserable conditions of life that this society imposes can easily be channeled into projects that serve the ruling order or at least the specific interest of one or another of the rulers. The examples of situations in the past few decades in which the rage of the exploited has been harnessed to fuel nationalist, racialist or religious projects that serve only to reinforce domination are too many to count. The possibility of the end of the current social order is as great as it ever

was, but the faith in its inevitability can no longer pretend to have an objective basis.

But in order to truly understand the revolutionary project and begin the project of figuring out how to carry it out (and to developing an analysis of how the ruling class manages to deflect the rage of those it exploits into its own projects), it is necessary to realize that exploitation does not merely occur in terms of the production of wealth, but also in terms of the reproduction of social relationships. Regardless of the position of any particular proletarian in the productive apparatus, it is in the interests of the ruling class that everyone would have a role, a social identity, that serves in the reproduction of social relationships. Race, gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual preference, subculture—all of these things may, indeed, reflect very real and significant differences, but all are social constructions for channeling these differences into roles useful for the maintenance of the current social order. In the most advanced areas of the current society where the market defines most relationships, identities largely come to be defined in terms of the commodities that symbolize them, and interchangeability becomes the order of the day in social reproduction, just as it is in economic production. And it is precisely because identity is a social construction and increasingly a saleable commodity that it must be dealt with seriously by revolutionaries, analyzed carefully in its complexity with the precise aim of moving beyond these categories to the point that our differences (including those that this society would define in terms of race, gender, ethnicity, etc.) are the reflection of each of us as singular individuals.

Because there is no common positive project to be found in our condition as proletarians—as the exploited and dispossessed—our project must be the struggle to destroy our proletarian condition, to put an end to our dispossession. The essence of what we have lost is not control over the means of production or of material wealth; it is our lives themselves, our capacity to create our existence in terms of our own needs and desires. Thus, our struggle finds its terrain everywhere, at all times. Our aim is to destroy everything that keeps our lives from us: capital, the state, the industrial and post-industrial technological apparatus, work, sacrifice, ideology, every organization that tries to usurp our struggle, in short, all systems of control.

In the very process of carrying out this struggle in the only way that we can carry it out—outside of and against all formality and institutionalization—we begin to develop new ways of relating



ing from the pope, originally the state and religion were two faces of a single entity. When the rulers were not gods or high priests themselves, they were still ordained by a god through the high priest, specially consecrated to represent god on earth as ruling in his or her name. Thus, the laws of the rulers were the laws of god; their words were god's words. It is true that eventually religions developed that distinguished the laws of god from those of the state. Generally these religions developed among people undergoing persecution and, thus, feeling the need to appeal to a higher power than that of the state. Thus, these religions supported the concept of rulership, of a law that ruled over individuals as well as over earthly states. So if the ancient Hebrews could distinguish "godly" from "ungodly" rulers, and if the early Christians could say, "We should obey god rather than men", such statements were not calls for rebellion, but for obedience to a higher authority. The Christian bible makes this explicit when it says, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's" and "Submit yourselves to the powers that be, for they are ordained of god." If selective readings of parts of the Judeo-Christian scriptures could inspire revolt, it is unlikely to be the revolt of individuals against all that steals their lives away. Rather it would be a revolt against a particular state with the aim of replacing it with a state based on the "laws of god."

But religion is far more than just the Judeo-Christian tradition. It is therefore necessary to examine the concept of the sacred itself, the idea that seems to be at the heart of religion. Frequently, these days I hear people lamenting the loss of the sacred. I can't help but laugh. In this world where borders, boundaries, fences, razor-wire, laws and restrictions of all kinds abound, what is there that is *not* sacred; what is there that we can touch, interact with and enjoy freely? But, of course, I misunderstand. People are actually lamenting the loss of wonder, of joy, of that expansive feeling of consuming and being consumed by a vibrant living universe. But if this is what they are lamenting, then why speak of the loss of the sacred, when the concept of the sacred is itself the thing that separated wonder and joy from the world and placed in a separate realm?

The sacred has never actually meant that which is wonderful, awe-inspiring or joyful. It has meant that which is *consecrated.* Consecration is precisely the process of separating something from normal life, from free and equal availability to everyone to use as they see fit, in order to set it aside for a specialized task. This process begins with the rise of specialists in interpreting the meaning of

# RELIGION:
## When the Sacred Imprisons the Marvelous

It is likely that human beings have always had encounters with the world around them and flights of their own imaginations that have evoked an expansive sense of wonder, an experience of the marvelous. Making love to the ocean, devouring the icy, spearmint moon, leaping toward the stars in a mad, delightful dance – such are the wicked imaginings that make the mechanistic conceptions of the world appear so dreary. But sadly in this age the blight of industrialism with its shallow mechanistic logic that springs from the bookkeepers' worldview of capital has damaged many minds, draining reason of passion and passion of the capacity to create its own reasons and find its own meanings in the experience and creation of the marvelous. So many turn to the sacred in search of the sense of joy and wonder, forgetting that the sacred itself is the prison of the marvelous.

The history of religion is really the history of property and of the state. These institutions are all founded on expropriations that together make up social alienation, the alienation of individuals from their capacity for creating their lives on their own terms. Property expropriates access to the material abundance of the world from individuals, placing it into the hands of a few who fence it in and place a price upon it. The state expropriates capacity of individuals to create their lives and relationships on their own terms, placing it into the hands of a few in the form of power to control the lives of others, transforming their activity into the labor power necessary to reproduce the social order. In the same way, religion (and its current parallels, ideology and psychiatry) is the institution that expropriates the capacity of individuals to interpret their interactions with the worlds around and within them, placing into the hands of a few specialists who create interpretations that serve the interests of power. The processes through which these expropriations are carried out are not really separated, but are rather thoroughly interconnected, forming an integrated network of domination, but I think, in this age when many anarchists seem to take interest in the sacred, it is useful to examine religion as a specific institution of domination.

If currently, at least in the Western-style democracies, the connection between religion and the state seems relatively tenuous, residing in the dogmatic outbursts of an Ashcroft or the occasional bless-



based on self-organization, a commonality based on the unique differences that define each of us as individuals whose freedom expands with the freedom of the other. It is here in revolt against our proletarian condition that we find that shared positive project that is different for each one of us: the collective struggle for individual realization.

# WORK:
## *The Theft of Life*

*"What is the bombing of a judge, the kidnapping of an industrialist,*
*the hanging of a politician, the shooting of a cop,*
*the looting of a supermarket, the burning of a commissioner's office,*
*the stoning of a journalist,*
*the heckling of an intellectual, the thrashing of an artist,*
*in the face of the deadly alienation of our existence,*
*the much too early sound of the alarm clock,*
*the traffic jam on the expressway,*
*the goods for sale lined up on the shelves?"*

The alarm clock disrupts your sleep again—as always, much too early. You drag yourself from the warmth of your bed to the bathroom for a shower, a shave and a shit, then run down to the kitchen where you wash down a pastry or, if you have the time, some toast and eggs with a cup of coffee. Then you rush out the door to battle traffic jams or crowds in the subway until you arrive... at work, where your day is spent in tasks not of your choosing, in compulsory association with others involved in related tasks, the primary aim of which is the continued reproduction of the social relationships that constrain you to survive in this manner.

But this is not all. In compensation, you receive a wage, a sum of money that (after paying rent and bills) you must take out to shopping centers to buy food, clothes, various necessities and entertainment. Though this is considered your "free time" as opposed to "work time", it too is compulsory activity that only secondarily guarantees your survival, its primary purpose again being to reproduce the current social order. And for most people, moments free of these constraints are fewer and fewer.

According to the ruling ideology of this society, this existence is the result of a social contract between equals—equals before the law that is. The worker, it is said, contracts to sell her labor to the boss for a mutually agreed upon wage. But can a contract be considered free and equal when one side holds all the power?

If we look at this contract more closely, it becomes clear that it is no contract at all, but the most extreme and violent extortion. This is currently exposed most blatantly at the margins of capitalist society where people who have lived for centuries (or, in some cases, mil-



struggle. But, as one comrade wrote: "...this struggle is widespread or it is nothing. Only when looting becomes a large-scale practice, when the gift arms itself against exchange value, when relationships are no longer mediated by commodities and individuals give their own value to things, only then does the destruction of the market and of money – that s all one with the demolition of the state and every hierarchy – become a real possibility", and with it the destruction of property. The individual revolt against the world of property must expand into a social revolution that will break down every fence and open every possibility for individual realization.

market. The institution of property could not exist without the state that concentrates power into institutions of domination. Without the laws, the arms, the cops and the courts, property would have no real basis, no force to support it.

In fact, it could be said that the state is itself the instituting of property. What is the state if not a network of institutions through which control over a particular territory and its resources is asserted and maintained by force of arms? All property is ultimately state property since it exists only by permission and under the protection of the state. Dependent on the levels of real power, this permission and protection can be revoked at any time for any reason, and the property will revert back to the state. This is not to say the state is more powerful than capital, but rather that the two are so thoroughly entwined as to constitute a single social order of domination and exploitation. And property is the institution through which this order asserts its power in our daily lives, compelling us to work and pay in order to reproduce it.

So property is actually the razor wire, the "No Trespassing" sign, the price tag, the cop and the security camera. The message that these all carry is the same: one cannot use or enjoy anything without permission, and permission must be granted by the state and paid for in money somewhere along the line.

It comes as no surprise then that the world of property, ruled by the market and the state, is an impoverished world where lack, not satisfaction, permeates existence. The pursuit of individual realization, blocked at every turn by yet another fence, is replaced by the homogenizing, atomizing competition to accumulate more things, because in this world the "individual" is measured only in terms of the things that he owns. And the inhuman community of the price tag strives to bury singularity beneath identities found in shop windows.

Attacking the things owned by the rulers of this world – smashing bank windows, burning police cars, blowing up the employment office or breaking machinery – certainly has its worth. If nothing else, one may get a bit of pleasure, and some actions of this sort may even hinder specific projects of the ruling order. But ultimately we must attack the *institution* of property, every physical, legal, moral or social fence. This attack begins from the desire we each have to take back our life and determine it on our own terms. Every moment and every space we steal back from this society of production and consumption provides us with a weapon for expanding this



lennia) on their own terms find their capacity to determine the conditions of their existence ripped away by the bulldozers, chainsaws, mining equipment and so on of the world's rulers. But it is a process that has been going on for centuries, a process involving blatant, large-scale theft of land and life sanctioned and carried out by the ruling class. Bereft of the means for determining the conditions of their own existence, the exploited cannot be said, in honesty, to be contracting freely and equally with their exploiters. It is clearly a case of blackmail.

And what are the terms of this blackmail? The exploited are forced to sell the time of their life to their exploiters in exchange for survival. And this is the real tragedy of work. The social order of work is based on the imposed opposition between life and survival. The question of how one will get by suppresses that of how one wants to live, and in time this all seems natural and one narrows one's dreams and desires to the things that money can buy.

However, the conditions of the world of work do not just apply to those with jobs. One can easily see how the unemployed searching for a job from fear of homelessness and hunger is caught up in the world of work. But the same holds for the recipient of state aid whose survival depends on the existence of the assistance bureaucracy... and even for those for whom the avoidance of getting a job has become such a priority that one's decisions come to center around scams, shoplifting, dumpster diving—all the various ways to *get by* without a job. In other words, activities that could be fine means for supporting a life project become ends in themselves, making mere survival one's life project. How, really, does his differ from a job?

But what is the real basis of the power behind this extortion that is the world of work? Of course, there are laws and courts, police and military forces, fines and prisons, the fear of hunger and homelessness—all very real and significant aspects of domination. But even the state's force of arms can only succeed in carrying out its task because people submit. And here is the real basis of all domination—the submission of the slaves, their decision to accept the security of known misery and servitude rather than risk the unknown of freedom, their willingness to accept a guaranteed but colorless survival in exchange for the possibility of truly living that offers no guarantees.

So in order to put an end to one's slavery, to move beyond the limits of merely getting by, it is necessary to make a decision to

refuse to submit; it is necessary to begin to reappropriate one's life here and now. Such a project inevitably places one in conflict with the entire social order of work; so the project of reappropriating one's existence must also be the project of destroying work. To clarify, when I say "work", I do not mean the activity by which one creates the means of one's existence (which ideally would never be separate from simply living) but rather a social relationship that transforms this activity into a sphere separate from one's life and places it in the service of the ruling order so that the activity, in fact, ceases to have any direct relationship to the creation of one's existence, but rather only maintains it in the realm of mere survival (at whatever level of consumption) through a series of mediations of which property, money and commodity exchange are among the most significant. This is the world we must destroy in the process of taking back our lives, and the necessity of this destruction makes the project of the reappropriation of our lives one with the projects of insurrection and social revolution.



# PROPERTY:
## The Enclosing Fences of Capital

Among the many great lies that maintains the rule of capital is the idea that property is freedom. The rising bourgeoisie made this claim as they partitioned the earth with fences of all sorts – physical fences, legal fences, moral fences, social fences, military fences… whatever they found necessary to enclose the murdered wealth of the earth and to exclude the multitudes who were undesirable except as labor power.

Like so many lies of power, this one manages to deceive through sleight-of-hand. The multitudes "unchained" from their land were free to choose between starving or selling the time of their lives to whatever master would buy them. "Free laborers" their masters called them, since unlike chattel slaves, the masters had no need to take responsibility for their lives. It was merely their labor power that the masters bought. Their lives were their own, they were told, though in fact these had been stolen away when the capitalist masters enclosed the land and drove these "free laborers" off to search for survival. This process of expropriation, which allowed capitalism to develop, continues at its margins today, but another sleight-of-hand maintains the bourgeois illusion at the center.

Property, we are told, is a thing and we purchase it with money. Thus, according to the lie, freedom resides in the things that we can buy and increases with their accumulation. In pursuit of this freedom that is never quite attained, people chain themselves to activities not of their choosing, giving up every vestige of real choice, in order to earn the money that is supposed to buy them freedom. And as their lives are consumed in the service of projects that have never been their own, they spend their wages on toys and entertainment, on therapy and drugs, these anesthetics that guarantee they won't see through the lie.

Property, in fact, is not the thing that is owned. It is the fences – the fences that keep us in, the fences that keep us out, all the enclosures through which our lives are stolen from us. Thus, property is, above all, a restriction, a limit of such magnitude that it guarantees that no individual will be able to realize herself completely for as long as it exists.

To fully understand this, we must look at property as a social relationship between things and people mediated by the state and the

them. But the necessity for control that is as total as possible moves the rulers of this order to accept these risks, hoping that they will be able to fix the weak links quickly enough.

So technology as we know it, this industrial system of integrated techniques, machinery, people and resources, is not neutral. It is a specific tool, created in the interests of the ruling class, that was never intended to serve to meet our needs and desires, but rather to maintain and extend the control of the ruling order. Most anarchists recognize that the state, private property, the commodity system, the patriarchal family and organized religion are inherently dominating institutions and systems that need to be destroyed if we are to create a world in which we are all free to determine our lives as we see fit. Thus, it is strange that the same understanding is not applied to the industrial technological system. Even in this age when factories provide no space for any sort of individual initiative, when communications are dominated by huge systems and networks accessible to every police agency and which determine how one can use them, when the technological system as a whole requires humans as little more than hands and eyes, maintenance workers and quality control inspectors, there are still anarchists who call for "taking over the means of production". But the technological system that we know is itself part of the structures of domination. It was created to more efficiently control those exploited by capital. Like the state, like capital itself, this technological system will need to be destroyed in order for us to take back our lives. What this means with regards to specific tools and techniques will be determined in the course of our struggle against the world of domination. But precisely in order to open the way to possibilities for creating what we desire in freedom, the machinery of control will have to be destroyed.



# *THE MACHINERY OF CONTROL:*
## A Critical Look at Technology

*"Criticizing technology [...] means considering its general framework, seeing it not simply is an assemblage of machinery, but as a social relationship, a* system*; it means understanding that a technological instrument reflects the society that produces it, and that its introduction changes relations between individuals. Criticizing technology means refusing to subordinate human activity to profit."*

—*from* At Daggers Drawn

Technology does not develop in a vacuum, independently of the social relationships of the order in which it develops. It is the product of a context, and so inevitably reflects that context. Thus, the claim that technology is neutral has no basis. It could not possibly be any more neutral that the other systems developed to guarantee the reproduction of the current social order—government, commodity exchange, marriage and the family, private property, ... Thus a serious revolutionary analysis necessarily needs to include a critical assessment of technology.

By technology, I do not mean simply tools, machines or even "an assemblage of machinery" as individual entities, but rather and integrated system of techniques, machinery, people and materials designed to reproduce the social relationships that prolong and advance its existence. In order to be clear from the start, I am not saying that technology *produces* social relationships, but rather that it is designed to *reproduce* them in accordance with the needs of the ruling system.

Before capitalism came to dominate social relationships, tools, techniques and even a number of machines had been created and applied to specific tasks. There were even some systematic applications of techniques and machinery that could be considered technological in the fullest sense of the word. It is interesting to note that these latter were applied most fully precisely where power required strict order—in monasteries, in the torture chambers of the inquisition, in galleys, in the creation of monuments to power, in the bureaucratic, military and police structures of powerful empires like dynastic China. But they remained largely peripheral to the daily life of the vast majority of people who tended to use tools and techniques that they created themselves as individuals or within their small community.

With the rise of capitalism, the necessity for the large-scale extraction and development of resources led to the bloody and ruthless expropriation of all that had been shared communally by the newly developing capitalist ruling class (a process that was extended internationally through the building of colonial empires) and the development of an increasingly integrated technological system that allowed the maximum efficiency in the use of resources including labor power. The aims of this system were increased efficiency in the extraction and development of resources and increased control over the exploited.

The earliest applications of industrial techniques occurred on board mercantile and naval ships and on the plantation. The latter was in fact a new system of large-scale farming for profit that could develop at the time due to the dispossession of peasants in Europe—especially Britain—providing a quantity of indentured servants and criminals sentenced to hard labor and the development of the African slave-trade that tore people from their homes and forced them into servitude. The former was also largely based on the dispossession of the exploited classes—many of whom found themselves kidnapped and forced into labor on the ships. The industrial system imposed in these contexts did not so much have a basis in an assemblage of manufactured machines as in the method of work coordination in which the workers were the gears of the machine and if one failed to do his part it would put the entire structure of work at risk.

But there were specific aspects of this system that threatened it. The plantation system, by bringing together various dispossessed groups with differing knowledge and experiences, allowed interactions that could provide a basis for illegal association and shared revolt. Sailors who lived in slave-like conditions on the ships also provided a means of communication between different places creating a kind of internationalism of the dispossessed. The records of illegal associations and insurrections around the north Atlantic seaboard in the 1600's an 1700's involving all races of the dispossessed with little evidence of racism are inspiring, but it also forced capitalism to develop its techniques further. A combination of racial ideology and a division of labor was used to form rifts between black slaves and the indentured servants of European ancestry. In addition, though capital would never be able to do without the transportation of goods and resources, for economic as well as social reasons it began to shift emphasis to the manufacturing of resources into goods for sale on a large scale.



The reliance on small-scale artisans to manufacture goods was dangerous to capital in several ways. Economically, it was slow and inefficient and did not place enough of the profit into the hands of the ruling class. But more significantly the relative independence of the artisans made them difficult to control. They determined their own hours, their own work speed and so on. Thus, the factory system that had already proven fairly efficient on ships and plantations was applied as well to the manufacturing of goods.

So the industrial system was not simply (or even primarily) developed because it was a more efficient way for manufacturing goods. Capitalists are not particularly interested in the manufacturing of goods as such. Rather they manufacture goods simply as a necessary part of the process of expanding capital, creating profit and maintaining their control over wealth and power. Thus, the factory system—this integration of techniques, machines, tools, people and resources that is technology as we know it—was developed as a means for controlling the most volatile part of the production process—the human worker. The factory is in fact set up like a huge machine with each part—including the human parts—integrally interconnected with each other part. Although the perfecting of this process took place over time as class struggle showed the weaknesses in the system, this central aim was inherent in industrial technology from the beginning, because it was the reason behind it. The Luddites recognized as much and this was the source of their struggle.

If we recognize that the technology developed under capitalism was developed precisely to maintain and increase the control of the capitalist ruling class over our lives, there is nothing surprising about the fact that those technical advances that weren't specific responses to class struggle at the work place have occurred most often in the area of military and policing techniques. Cybernetics and electronics provide means of gathering and storing information on levels never known before, allowing for far greater surveillance over an increasingly impoverished and potentially rebellious world population. They also allow the decentralization of power without any loss of control to the rulers—the control resides precisely in the technological systems developed. Of course, this stretching of the web of control over the entire social sphere also means that it is very fragile. Weak links are everywhere, and creative rebels find